



TOWN OF NEWINGTON

1485 Main Street Newington, Connecticut 06111

Newington Volunteer Fire Department

MINUTES

Board of Fire Commissioners

Regular Meeting

November 13, 2008

Fire Headquarters

1485 Main Street

Newington, CT 06111

7:30pm

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:30pm

Pledge of Allegiance.

II. ATTENDANCE

Commissioner's Ziegler & Stoddard

Commissioner Jascowski-Excused

Chief Chris Schroeder

Assistant Chief Tom Lapierre

Deputy Chief Vic Depamphilis

Captain Jeff Trommer

Chris Miner

Dick Brown

Captain John Montano

Bill Pollock

Josh Brunett

Retired DFM Bob Roy

Fmr. Commissioner John Gubbins

Deputy Chief Tom Gill-Excused

Deputy Chief Frank Papa-Excused

Guests:

Crystal Trommer

Cindy Callahan

Council Liaison Tom Bowen

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Bill Pollock reported on the completion of the Company #1 Kitchen.

Commissioner Ziegler was happy the restoration was completed and it wished the company well on their successful project.

Chief Schroeder reported that he had received a phone call from a paramedic from AMR last week who was called to respond to a traffic accident on Route #84 in Plainville two weeks ago. The engine of the car was fully engulfed and the fire had spread into the passenger portion of the car.

Phone: (860) 667-5910 Fax: (860) 667-5914

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Public Participation cont:

The driver was still in the car as it filled with smoke. A Newington firefighter, Lt. Eric Lundin, approached the scene of the accident, before any other fire personnel responded, and forced entry into the car which now was totally engulfed and pulled the passenger to safety. AMR stood by waiting for the fire department to arrive and credited Lt. Lundin with saving the passenger's life. AMR further stated that they were very impressed with Lt. Lundin's actions.

Chief Schroeder commented that this was the second time in the last few months that he has received calls about our firefighters going beyond the limit of their responsibilities to ensure the public's safety.

Assistant Chief Tom Lapierre expressed his displeasure with the actions of the town concerning the return of the fire vehicle assigned to him. He stated that due to a great deal of misinformation his name and reputation have been "slammed around" and he expressed strong displeasure with the way the matter had been handled. He further stated that he had never been requested to return the vehicle and refused to do so as had been rumored. The Town Attorney was notified in the interim about the issue.

Commissioner Ziegler stated that the Town Council liaisons and Mayor Wright had been informed that Assistant Chief Lapierre had not refused to turn in the car. Assistant Chief Lapierre wanted this recent incident to be aired in a public forum only to make those involved aware that the Town Attorney was notified before the Chief of the department. He further stated that whether he kept or lost the car was not the issue. He was concerned about the false rumors and the effect they have on him. He is Assistant Chief, a veteran member, and also a Town of Newington employee.

Commissioner Stoddard explained that an individual councilor had taken this to the town attorney without the knowledge of the council or the mayor.

Fmr. Commissioner John Gubbins inquired about the department manpower totals to date. Chief Schroeder reported 117 active members on the combined company rosters. The cadet program has 11 members participating. Chief Schroeder further stated that we received 5-6 inquiries per week about membership. Day-time response has improved a great deal.

Chief Schroeder supports Asst. Chief Lapierre 100 % and he feels the activity concerning this issue is taking a great deal of his time that could be used for more positive and productive tasks. He always felt that the councilors that were our liaisons were there to support us. Councilor Bottalico has missed the last 4-5 meetings in a row and he is not helping us , rather he is hurting us and hurting us badly. Chief Schroeder requested a replacement with someone who wants to work with us and support our efforts.

Public Participation cont:

Commissioner Ziegler stated the Board would take Chief Schroeder's request under consideration and would be willing to discuss it at a later date. Chief Schroeder mentioned that he had passed out organizational charts outlining the reporting structure of each agency/department. The Board of Fire Commissioners reports directly to the citizens of Newington. The department looks to the Board as a buffer and to provide support for us. I hope they will take a little more direct action to prevent time consuming issues such as this one in the future

Commissioner Stoddard stated the Board supports the Department, the Administration and everything they do and how they do it. He further stated we moved to period in the department where things are going smoothly and we don't need the side issues to make it appear that things aren't going well.

Councilor Tom Bowen introduced himself for the record and apologized for arriving late. He stated he would like to take exception to the comments he had heard upon his arrival. He stated that there is a very strong relationship between the Town Council and the Board of Fire Commissioners. The council funds the expenditures of the fire department which includes the fire response apparatus and also the vehicles (cars) assigned to department personnel.

He has not received any communications stating there were problems between the council, fire department and the chief. If there were problems, he would've appreciated being told about it previous to the airing of it at this meeting.

He further stated he has had a relationship for over eight years with the department and he has never heard comments such as are being expressed tonight and he takes exception to it.

Commissioner Stoddard stated that he takes exception to what has been going on over the last two months with our vehicles. He went on to say that you (the council), may be responsible for the purchasing of the vehicles, the people may hold you responsible, but that doesn't make you responsible. The Board of Fire Commissioners is ultimately responsible for the fire department, all of the equipment and the members. When you and Jay, as councilors undermine that, it causes friction and conflict which we don't have in this department.

Councilor Bowen expressed surprise at the verbal exchange during public participation between the Commission and the public. Councilor Bowen explained the town has established a vehicle policy for all town vehicles. This is not about apparatus but vehicles for personal use.

Public Participation Cont:

If any of the department vehicles fall under this policy then ultimately it's the council's responsibility. He remarked that he finds it totally out of order to be having this discussion during the public participation portion of the meeting. He chose not to continue the discussion during the public forum.

Commissioner Ziegler stated that this issue could be discussed later between the Commission and Councilor Bowen.

Fmr. Commissioner John Gubbins stated that the total control of the department and all vehicles has always been the responsibility of the elected Board of Fire Commissioners.

IV. Communications

Communications were read and Chief Schroeder had added the quote for outfitting of Assistant Chief Lapierre's vehicle to the list of communications. The approximate cost will be \$ 3,000. The bequest was in the amount of \$ 20,000 from the estate. The money will be used to purchase gear and other personal department clothing.

A motion was made to accept the communications as presented. Motion passed.

V. Ledger Status

Ledger Status was accepted as presented.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

The Pay-per-Call program is on track on being followed closely by Ann Harter. Paperwork is being processed for Finance. Assistant Chief Lapierre was informed that all paperwork must be completed before payment can be made.

Captain's Fire Project is moving along slowly. East Hartford is on-line we are next. The delay is due to connectivity problems with our dispatch center and the Capitol Region. Our IT department has been working with the Capitol Region.

The equipment for new Engine #3 has been ordered and should be in soon.

The Rules & Regulations are with the Town Attorney.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

None

VIII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Pay-Per-Call checks will go out at the end of November. Fmr. Commissioner Gubbins asked about extra pieces of apparatus. The Hahn will go to the Cadets for training. Chief Schroeder wants to submit the same names for Volunteer of the Year as last year. The Board was in total agreement and will submit the necessary a paperwork as recommended.

IX. COMMISSIONER'S REMARKS

Commissioner Ziegler spoke of the success of Tip-A-Firefighter at Friday's. Chief Schroeder said \$1,243.60. was raised. Commissioner Ziegler commented that Engine #3 looks good and is in the process of being outfitted.

X. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:09pm

Submitted By: _____
Sue Reniewicz – Board Secretary

